LEARNING TO WRITE WELL by FINDING and NAMING QUALITIES of GOOD WRITING from ALL KINDS of TEXTS

HOW TO READ FOR CRAFT

1.) Respond initially to what the text says to you.
2.) Point on the page to a part you admire.
3.) Describe (don’t label) what the writer is doing.
4.) Speculate what the writer had to do (Ex: read, ask experts, travel, observe) to be able to write like that. Speculate on the kinds of revision the writer might have done.
5.) Imitate one thing that you like about the author’s craft: topic, tone, style, language patterns, imagery, use of dialogue, structures (especially ways to begin and end), sentences (shape, variety, and punctuation).

HOW TO USE TEXTS TO TEACH QUALITIES OF WRITING IN MINILESSONS AND CONFERENCES

1.) Have a “short stack” of favorite texts (picture books, poems, feature articles, etc) to teach from all year long.
2.) Carry a favorite, “rich with language and style” book under your arm as you confer. Put post-its in places you can use to demonstrate various craft moves.
3.) Make PowerPoint slides of exemplary pages to teach from.
4.) Type text samples onto 1-2 pages and xerox for kids to read, mark up, and keep.
5.) From these favorite text samples you can teach everything! (Tiny sample):
   Structure scenes (or small moments)
   Use of time sentence variety
   Dialogue paragraphing
   Imagery punctuation
   Humor techniques irony
**ACTIVITIES to TEACH QUALITIES OF WRITING from ALL KINDS of TEXTS**

- Capture kids’ own poetic, fresh, surprising ways of saying things

- Read voraciously (read alouds, independent, shared, partner, small group reading).
  -- Point out and notice qualities of texts that we can imitate in our own writing.
  -- Create rituals of reading a poem aloud every day, or having packets of short texts available for kids to read when they first come in each morning or before leaving at end of day.
  -- Make texts (poems, great lines from picture books) big and prominent in the classroom, in hallways, on cafeteria walls.

- Make model texts simple at first so that kids feel successful noticing qualities of good writing.

- Chart what kids notice (and what you notice) to make the possibilities for crafting public.

- Draw (or dance, act out, make collages of) the images that language in texts makes you see.

- Every day, for one week, borrow a feature from a poem or picture book to try out in your own writing.

- Demonstrate choosing one feature or element to imitate. (Ultimately, kids will choose for themselves what to imitate).

- Have children practice that feature in something they have written or are writing.

- Practice Storytelling, revising for more explicit language; plot development; character development; beginnings and endings.

- Go on “Lovely Language” scavenger hunts for great uses of language:
--While reading aloud, and during independent reading, put post-its on places in books that you and kids think are “beautiful” or use language in a surprising way. Make a wall full of language post-its after reading the books, or have kids put theirs in their writing notebooks.
--Put great lines, sentences, and phrases (or just “juicy” words) from poems, picture book, novels, our own writing on bookmarks, posters, greeting cards, in newsletters, and illustrate them.

• “Metaphor Madness”—like the above scavenger hunt, but focus one specifically on METAPHOR. Look in ALL texts, not just poetry. You can pick a topic, say “the moon” and find 5 poems, picture books, novels, articles about that topic. List all the different ways that authors compare it to something else.

• Author Studies
  --Read all the works of one author. (Some writers, like Walter Dean Myers, Jacqueline Woodson work in numerous genres).
  --Chart what kids notice about the style, sound/voice, word choice, forms of a favorite author.
  --Imitate one or two features that we admire from that writer.
  --This can also be done with just one poem or text by any writer.

• Genre Studies
  --All the same moves as with the Author Study, but will focus on poetry, fiction, editorials, etc. by multiple writers.
  --Again, choose one or two features of one or two writers to imitate.

• Ask kids to reflect on and assess how reading has influenced their writing.
WHEN AUTHORS CRAFT WRITING, THEY PAY ATTENTION TO:

**Focus:** of their topic, of a certain event or time, of an idea

**Detail:** of persons, place, action, dialogue, objects

**Image:** to make it like a movie or like paintings—describe things so reader can see, hear, smell, feel, and experience them

**Music/Sound of Words & Sentences:** authors deliberately choose words for their sound and make interesting rhythms with the sentences by varying length

**Elaboration:** authors try to say more about a little bit—not just by adding on, but by being “inside the moment”

**Structure:** authors decide what the sections are and what order helps them flow

**Beginning:** texts begin in ways that make readers want to keep reading and to establish the situation or the point of the piece; often authors use something very familiar to readers (anecdote), or hint at a mystery to unfold

**Ending:** text ends in a way that wraps things up or leaves reader wondering about and wanting to know more about the topic

**Clarity:** authors watch out for parts that might be confusing and try to give the reader more help in those sections

**Significance:** authors help audience see that there is a point to this story/essay/feature article/editorial/report

**Editing:** (a few things to look for):
Sentence boundaries; sentence complexity and variety; punctuation
Paragraphing (making chunks of meaning)
Looking for the best or most surprising words; clarifying